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COMMONWEAL

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## *Of Vacua*

OF COURSE history is not geography, and hence it is grossly misleading to label such an event as President Truman's recent address to Congress with regard to Greece and Turkey a "turning point" in our history. It would be more accurate to describe it as a moment during the course of our journey down a road when we examine the compass to see in what direction that road ineluctably leads us. That is why the criticism of such men as Henry A. Wallace is so pointless: it is based on the assumption that we have a *real* choice. Whereas our choice is only between alternatives *both* of which Mr. Wallace would like to repudiate.

To make this clear we must look back a little further than the day before yesterday. When our nation was first born, it was not only possible but wise and desirable that we devote our best efforts to the development of the incredible riches and opportunity lying ready at hand. To have squandered our substance in the quarrels of others would have been unthinkably silly. Moreover, historical circumstances made it entirely feasible for us to start with the great American Policy of having no foreign policy—except to protect our trade. The major quarrel of empire in those days was between Britain and France, with the Dutch playing an amusing side rôle as restive partners in Napoleon's revolutionary inheritance. Since this kept busy, with their own quarrel, the only powers technically strong enough to have bothered us, and since the world then was hugely bigger than it is today, we had two decades in which we could and did afford utterly to ignore anything but the interests of our own self-development. The war of 1812 merely served to confirm our safety, by proving that Britain was too busy elsewhere effectively to do much against us. Then came the pacification of Europe and Britain's decision to consolidate her empire (together with her active support of our *quid pro quo* in the Monroe Doctrine). Thus the British Empire supplied a sturdy play-pen in which that lusty infant, the United States, could disport itself without serious fear of interference from abroad. Politically, we had a completely free hand, while at the same time we reaped the full benefit of foreign capital investments and of unrestricted immigration, these two, coupled with our own ingenuity, leading to the fastest economic expansion any country has ever experienced.

During all those years—almost a century—we continued in substance to have no foreign policy, except, as already indicated, the policy of safeguarding our nationals and our trade when they were abroad. No clearer indication of our instinctive awareness of this state of affairs can be found than the incredibly extemporized foreign service of our country during that century. We took it for granted that men wealthy in their own right would, for the sake of prestige and self-satisfaction, be willing to act as our ambassadors and ministers at great financial sacrifice in all the capitals of the world, and we supplied them with neither permanent embassies nor efficient staffs with which to do an adequate job. And what we must now remember is that all this life of Riley was made possible—whether we like it or not—by the existence of a friendly-disposed British Empire.

In 1914 came the first major challenge to that Empire since Napoleon. Our eventual entry into the first World War might, perhaps, have been avoided, had the Imperial German Government been able and willing to pay the price required to prevent our involvement. Since it did not, and since our natural community of interest with Britain, though very little realized by the mass of Americans, in fact had deep historic roots, what took place was substantially unavoidable. All that the war of 1914-1918 accomplished, from our point of view, was to strengthen that community of interest while at the same time greatly weakening the strength of the play-pen within which we hoped once more to gambol. For a brief time we did so, displaying all of our usual



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habits, including the reduction of our armed forces to virtual impotence.

Then came another challenge to that weakened empire, this time from both Europe and Asia simultaneously. And this time the challengers, recognizing even more clearly than we did the mutuality of American and British interests, committed the supreme folly of an overt attack. From the point of view of our advantage, this was perhaps just as well, since our historical isolationism would otherwise probably have permitted the triumph of Germany and Japan and would thus have left us confronted with a solidly organized Eurasia arrayed against us. Our intervention in the second World War had at least this advantage: that it left us confronted not by a single totalitarian power or alliance of powers controlling Europe, Asia and Africa, but by a single large totalitarian power and a great number of less powerful nations whose futures were not yet committed in one direction or the other. Had this war cost the British Empire less than it did, it is even conceivable that we could once more have withdrawn into our play-pen, however shaky and indeed metaphysical it might have become. But it is clear that the British Empire in its nineteenth century reality is gone. Another—and perhaps morally better—reality may survive for years to come, but it will not be the reality which made our old diplomacy possible.

And since Russia is there, and since she gives no signs of being willing to stay put, but, on the contrary, gives every indication of an eagerness to fill every political vacuum created by the disappearance of the old British Empire, we face an alternative little to our taste and certainly least of all to the taste of Mr. Wallace. Either we ourselves are willing to fill those vacua, or we must be willing to let Russia do so.

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All this merely leads to the conclusion that President Truman and his advisers have finally been forced to a realistic recognition of the present pattern of world power and have elected the first alternative. Had there been any indication that Russia (and her brand of communism) is not expansionist, perhaps the second alternative would have been possible and even desirable. Had the United States possessed, substantially all over the world, democratic parties in close touch with Washington, taking their orders from Washington, and whenever necessary financed by Washington, the whole picture would be different. But we are in no such position. It would be repellent to the American mind to be in any such position, since we deeply resent precisely that breed of foreign allegiance in our own country and are deeply loath ourselves to work with such methods.

The happiest outcome of the foreign policy which events have forced upon us would be to restore in those areas where we intervene a reasonable degree of economic well-being achieved not directly by us but by the people of those areas, working out their own salvation. Our part would lie in supplying them with the straw without which they can make no bricks. Our subsidiary part would lie in protecting them against the civil disorder with which even the presence of straw is not enough. Our most dynamic part of all would be to expedite in all such areas the establishment of political systems which do not violate our own conscience.

If we can only half succeed in accomplishing these ends, we shall have done mankind a great service, for we shall effectively have countered the best weapon Russia has against us—the only weapon which obliterates in the minds of its victims our own atomic bomb. This is Russia's special weapon of poverty and despair, whether arising from natural causes or from our own neglect, or skilfully induced to Russia's advantage.

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To have said all this is by no means to sound the knell for the United Nations. After having insisted on the veto ourselves, it ill behooves us to complain because the UN is unable to meet a situation which the veto entirely prevents it from meeting. It is well that the UN should continue to be based on an assumption of decency and a desire for peace among all the major powers; some day that assumption might come true, and then the UN could really flower. In the meantime, since the United States as much as anyone else is responsible for the limitations of the UN, we are forced to act unilaterally whenever a situation arises beyond effective handling by the UN. This we have done, and it remains only to be seen whether we shall have the strength and wisdom to implement our policy in such a way that we shall have done better than the British did or, as we believe, the Russians can do.

### *The Noonday Sun*

DURING the season of long northern nights, newspaper columnists—like the people they write about—usually travel down to Florida for a week or so. Their dispatches, on these occasions, generally indicate a freshened and more penetrating grasp of the passing scene. This year, Mr. Arthur Krock, the political columnist, has wired from Palm Beach a story illustrating the effect of abrupt climatic change on the northern business mind which will probably stand as the season's most thorough study of American social behavior in an exotic climate.

"Ever since the perfection of the long-distance telephone," wrote Mr. Krock, gazing thoughtfully out to sea, "the number of men active in large affairs who spend much of the winter in this

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region has greatly increased, and the arrival of commercial air transport has added to their ranks." Mr. Krock then went on to explain how he happened to be thinking along those lines. He had recently spent an evening, he wrote, in the company of a number of men active in large affairs, discussing the future economic-foreign policy of the United States. The most forceful and winning speaker of the evening had been Mr. Joseph P. Kennedy, former Ambassador from the United States to Great Britain. Impressed by Mr. Kennedy's remarks, as well as by the quality of his audience (men "who wield great power and influence in the financial and economic community of the United States and who, like the former Ambassador, are not without disciples in Congress and the Administration"), Mr. Krock devoted the remainder of his report to a summary of Mr. Kennedy's persuasive reflections on future American economic-foreign policy.

Facing an audience already weakened by long days spent under an unfamiliar sun, Mr. Kennedy called for an end to our expensive foreign policy. Reminding his listeners, proudly, that he had opposed the American loan to England, Mr. Kennedy declared that further loans abroad would enfeeble the American system and would quicken the advance, here at home, of the very totalitarian notions that we are attempting, by means of spasmodic loans, to discourage abroad. These countries that think communism is so fine, said Mr. Kennedy. Let them try it for a while. He assured his audience that the citizens of any country who chose such an experiment would find it disillusioning. On realizing that they had been hoodwinked (a discovery which most people could be expected to make, Mr. Kennedy said, in a matter of a few years) the chastened experimenters would turn enthusiastically to the free institutions and superior business methods of the democratic West. Having remained aloof during this period of trial-and-error, the United States would then be in a position to loan wisely, trade briskly, and to guide the world away from the communist penny-arcade. However, Mr. Kennedy declared, the United States should make an effort to see that nobody starves while the doomed experiment is under way. Also, farm implements should be generously extended to all. . . . A mild off-shore wind blew through the hushed cabana. Mr. Krock continued to take notes. And somewhere in the distance a perfected long-distance telephone rang.

### *Going Out of One's Way*

IT IS a legitimate source of national pride that we can rely on common sense to counteract the vast flood of agitational material disseminated by communists, extreme nationalists, various crackpots, short-sighted reactionaries and the rest. Bits of this noxious stuff make impacts here and there, but the restrictions required to prevent *any* such contamination would themselves embody even worse evils than those they seek to prevent. Yet maintenance of freedom of expression even in the United States is no simple problem. It is especially difficult right now with so much Russian-sponsored "literature" being currently hawked about. The realization that the communists are taking advantage of our freedom of expression to confuse people by all manner of untruth and stratagem is particularly galling—in view of the Soviets' objective of suppressing the very freedoms under which their American adherents now operate. Yet genuine political democracy involves giving its opponents an opportunity of having their propagandistic say.

Communist papers are therefore unworriedly if distastefully tolerated even at a time when they are straining every slug of type to thwart the objectives of the United States. That is the background for an extraordinary minor incident transpiring in New York. The *Times* learned that the *Daily Worker* was so badly strapped for paper that it might have to stop publication for a short interval. Was this a welcome bit of information? Not at all. Our foremost American newspaper dipped into its own stock of newsprint and loaned sixteen tons of it to the harassed *Worker*.

And so a slight breathing spell, which would have occurred without the slightest taint of coercion on the part of anyone, never came. There is no break in the dissemination of the *Worker's* heavily-subsidized fulminations against American traditions and American policies.

Was this simply a helping hand extended from one newspaper to another? Apparently not. Otherwise it would have taken place quietly without the slightest fuss or feathers. In actuality the *Times* boasted of its generosity editorially—and with bravado as a striking blow for freedom.

What disturbs us is not so much the encouragement of the *Worker* implicit in this strange incident. It is the state of mind the editorial reveals. Freedom of expression is indeed a touchstone of political democracy, but it should not be an absolute. (It is already curtailed where libel and public morals are involved.) It can become a fetish. This incident reminds us that the cult of Voltaire's well-worn statement to Helvetius extends rather high and wide in this land of little learning. In their apostrophes to freedom our publicists rarely cite any other phrase than, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." But lack of other handy texts does not in any way diminish the fervor with which Americans cling to the basic right of free expression. The only puzzle here is that the *Times* should have gone so far out of its way—voluntarily and enthusiastically—to assist avowed adversaries of human freedom.

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# *Twelve Million Homes*

## The Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill; why it is urgent, who blocks it

*G. H. Robinson*

OUT IN CHICAGO a few weeks ago the Housing Expediter, Frank R. Creedon, told the annual convention of the National Association of Home Builders that henceforth in New York and Chicago they could charge veterans up to $160 a month, plus service charges, for new apartments. This doubled the rent ceilings which prevailed until a few months ago, and it meant victory after a long drive by builders and the real estate industry for "realistic" rentals on newly constructed property.

The new ceiling was perfectly adapted to veterans' incomes which are, on the national average, $42 a week. The average veteran not only could pay the $160 monthly rental, but, if additional service charges were not too high, would still have a dollar or two left over each month for food, clothing, medical attention, carfare and all other living essentials.

Even this generous gesture, however, did not satisfy the builders and realtors completely. According to the New York *Times*, one of New York's biggest home builders, Alfred Gross of Queens, commented: "The revised rules indicate a trend toward a more flexible and more realistic approach to the housing problem. I am still firmly convinced, however, that for a balanced economy and for a lower tax burden on small homes, the Government should take all controls off commercial and industrial construction." A spokesman for the Real Estate Board of New York said that despite the new rentals, "no one knows what building costs are likely to be, and as long as that situation exists there will be hesitance about proceeding in the face of any rent limitations, no matter what they are." Sam Minskoff, a realtor, said that the new ceilings still fell short of the figures required by the industry and suggested that further increases of $5 or $6 a room would be much closer to an economic rent for apartments built now, the *Times* said.

An embittered veteran, astounded by Creedon's prodigality with rent money and stunned by industry's insatiable lust for profits and coldness to this new bribe to build, said resignedly that he thought now was the time for the Government to bring out its secret housing programs, Housing Operation X and Housing Operation Y.

"Housing Operation X is a solution to the *long-range* housing program," he explained. "It's simple and effective. Just sterilize all homeless veterans. Within a generation or two their housing problems will exist no longer."

"And Housing Operation Y?" we asked.

"That is a short-range or emergency measure to end the crisis now. We put the Belsen gas chambers in operation, run veterans' families through—no more housing problem."

Probably as a matter of habit, the home builders railed against Government controls, although all had been removed or relaxed to a point beyond which the entire housing economy would surely crash. Keynoting this contradiction, Robert P. Gerholz, past president of the National Association of Home Builders, told the convention: "This is the first time since the NAHB was organized that our industry is practically free from controls. Present leadership in Government isn't bad. However, the time has come to change the program." He predicted that the number of construction starts would increase 20% with the removal of the remaining few essential controls. Nevertheless, at this writing little or no housing is being started; and 20% of nothing still is nothing. During 1946, under controls and despite great hardships, one million homes of various types were built.

By now it must be obvious to Government that relaxation of controls has hurt rather than helped housing. Industry too must have become a bit disillusioned with its leadership—no one can live in the word houses that are being woven daily by industry's orators. And, more to the point, neither builders nor realtors are making a nickel out of $160 apartments that are not being built.

The time has come for industry to sit down and re-examine its position on the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill, the only measure ever proposed which holds some real promise of solving the nation's chronic housing headaches. This legislation makes no pretense of providing homes for all our homeless this year—or even next year. But it is our best bet to overcome the current emergency in the shortest possible time and, eventually, to wipe out completely the woeful want of housing which has been a black mark on America's pre-eminent position in civilization for more than a generation.



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The building and real estate lobbies had the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill killed in the House Banking and Currency Committee at the last session of Congress after the Senate had passed it. It was done to death because in offering to subsidize 500,000 units of public housing for poor people it was "socializing" America. The handful of Congressmen on the House Banking and Currency Committee surely were not so naïve as to believe that balderdash. And neither were the lobbyists who mouthed it.

What was the real objection to the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill? Apparently it was the public housing feature. The industry, still anachronistic in its construction practices, is fearful of the day when it will be exposed by an efficient operator who can house slum dwellers in decent homes at little cost. In all these years of slums and Hoovervilles industry has made not the slightest move toward improving housing conditions for those of low income. The reason, of course, was that there was no profit in it.

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As a matter of fact, from the real estate point of view, slums are among the most profitable properties. Mean as the rentals sometimes are, profits are still far higher than from most other holdings, when the cost of operation is taken into consideration.

Slums are not profitable to communities, however. Municipalities as a whole pay through the nose for their upkeep. The slum areas of Cleveland comprise only .73% of the city's land area and contain 2.47% of the population. But the cost of police protection for this area is 6.47% of the city's entire police bill, health expenditures 7.3%, social services 12.29% and fire protection 14.44%. The blighted areas of Indianapolis contain 10.4% of the city's population; but of that city's entire expenditures a disproportionate share is sunk in slums: 16.7% of fire costs and 26% of social service costs. Not much comes out of these areas in taxes; but 25% of the city's misdemeanants and 36% of the felons come from there. Nevertheless, it is profitable to owners to perpetuate slums, and there is little indication that they will go out of existence until the ordinary taxpayer gets fed up with supporting them.

The Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill would wipe out slums—and some easy real estate profits.

But that is only a small part of what the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill would do. The 500,000 public housing units are a fraction of the 12,600,000 homes which the bill aims for during the next ten years. The big job would be done by private industry — with the Government helping only where industry will not or cannot do the job itself. To these major provisions industry offers little or no objection. It's "socialism" to house poor people; but Free Enterprise comes into full flower when the Government insures its investments and assures it of a profit.

The T.E.W. Bill would cut the cost of new housing by lowering interest rates, requiring smaller down payments and reducing monthly payments. It protects home owners by requiring a warranty of sound construction and by extending payments when, because of illness, unemployment or other misfortune beyond the homeowner's control, payments cannot be met on time. It puts neighborhood planning and home construction on a 20th century basis and sees that investors and builders get a fair profit and home owners and tenants get their money's worth.

The preamble of the T.E.W. Bill states its policy: "The Congress hereby declares that the general welfare and security of the Nation require a production of residential construction and related community development sufficient to remedy the serious cumulative housing shortage, to eliminate slums and blighted areas, to realize as soon as feasible the goal of a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family, and to enable the construction industry to make its full contribution toward an economy of full production and employment."

Under a permanent National Housing Commission, which would utilize the existing Government housing bureaus and services, the act would provide for scientific research for atomic age construction materials and techniques, help industry with market analyses and municipalities with local planning. Over five years the Government would grant a total of 25 millions to communities willing to share the expense of this research.

To help make property owners of many people in the middle third of the population — who earned in 1939 between $1,000 and $2,000 a year and paid between $20 and $40 a month for shelter—the T.E.W. Bill offers to insure easy mortgages. Thus a great group of Americans, now forced to be content with dilapidated hand-me-down houses, could own their own homes and increase their stake in Democracy. A down payment of only 5% would be required for homes costing less than $5,000; and payments could be spread over a period of 32 years at an interest rate of 4% or less. Clauses prohibit immediate foreclosure when illness or unemployment overtakes the home owner. The builder too is protected in that he can continue to own the homes he builds under an FHA mortgage until he can sell the houses. The FHA mortgages enable him to spread his operating capital over a large field and increase production.

For middle-income families who want to rent, the T.E.W. Bill offers attractive terms to investors. FHA-insured mortgages may cover as much as 90% of the value—95% in the case of

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non-profit cooperatives and state and local projects—and they may run for 40 years.

To attract investment in large-scale housing, the bill assures a minimum return of 3¼% on outstanding investments. Few long-term, safe investments offer this generous rock-bottom return. Of course, the investor may make as much more profit as he can.

The bill reaches out to improve the wretched housing that for many years has plagued our rural areas. Modern farm homes are rare in any but the richest growing localities. Ninety per cent of the nation's farm homes need thorough repair jobs or modern plumbing. For fairly well-to-do farm families, the T.E.W. Bill authorizes 33-year loans at interest not exceeding 4¼% and, when necessary, limited subsidy for up to 10 years in partial credit against loan interest and principal. For the Joads and Jukes and other unfortunate farm families whose living standards have dropped to something lower than human, the T.E.W. Bill offers small loans and grants to make their housing meet minimum standards of health and sanitation. About 250,000 units of rural housing would be affected by benefits of the bill, 150,000 of them under a low-rent provision for the very poor.

Veterans are given preference in several sections of the legislation. Of particular benefit is the priority afforded them in the sale of war and other federal housing, which the bill insists be sold to local public agencies on the understanding that veterans take first place in the line of prospective tenants.

Careful not to intrude in the domain of industry, the Government does not offer to re-develop slum areas. The T.E.W. Bill proposes merely that the Government contribute money toward the acquisition and preparation of the land. Dislocated families would have some preference for tenancy in federal public housing. But the job of building a brave new neighborhood in slum areas is up to private interests.

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The controversial slum clauses are opposed by realtor spokesmen on the ground that "the whole idea would bog down with politics, favoritism and Government red tape," that "public housing is a racket," that "slums can be eliminated by action of state and local governments working together with owners of blighted property—if property owners in any area don't want to help themselves, then it seems doubtful if the Government should bail them out anyway. Why bother?" The arguments follow the same line advanced against every progressive proposal since the founding of the nation.

Among the organizations opposing the T.E.W. Bill are: National Savings and Loan League, National Retail Lumber Dealers Association, National Real Estate Foundation, Mortgage Bankers Association of America, United States Savings and Loan League, Perpetual Building and Loan Association, Structural Clay Products Institute, National Lumber Manufacturers Association, Metropolitan Home Builders Association of Washington, United States Chamber of Commerce, Urban Land Institute, National Association of Home Builders of America, National Association of Real Estate Boards.

Many new champions of the T.E.W. Bill have appeared this year. Among the strongest is the United States Conference of Mayors which recently urged passage. The municipal leaders certainly could not agree with industry in seeing a solution to the slum problem in state and local cooperation.

Other organizations traditionally behind the legislation are all major veterans' organizations (excepting the American Legion, whose housing policy had been until a few weeks ago almost identical with that of profit-seeking industry), American Association of Social Workers, American Association of University Women, American Council on Education, American Council on Race Relations, American Federation of Labor, American Home Economics Association, American Planning and Civic Association, American Public Health Association, American Public Welfare Association, American Veterans' Committee, American Veterans of World War II (Amvets), Chicago Metropolitan Housing Council, Congress of Industrial Organizations, Consumers Clearing House, Consumers Union, Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches of the United States, Family Welfare Association of America, Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, General Federation of Women's Clubs, International Brotherhood of the Maintenance of Way Employees, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Association of Housing Officials, National Association of Rural Housing, National Board of the Young Women's Christian Association, National Catholic Welfare Conference, National Committee on Housing, Inc., National Conference of Catholic Charities, National Congress of Parents and Teachers, National Council of Catholic Women, National Council of Housing Associations, National Council of Jewish Women, National Council of Negro Women, National Farmers Union, National Federation of Settlements, National Institute of Municipal Law Officers, National Lawyers Guild, National League of Women Voters, National Mutual Housing Association, National Public Housing Conference, National Urban League, National Women's Trade Union League, Public Health Association of Cincinnati, the Ohio Housing Council and the Better Housing League of

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Cincinnati, United Neighborhood House, United States Conference of Mayors, and Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

The Rt. Rev. Msgr. John O'Grady, as secretary for the National Conference of Catholic Charities, has written in an excellent pamphlet, "Housing for Middle Income Families":

"The Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill marks a long step in advance toward our basic ideal of decent housing for every American family. Progress has already been made in providing decent housing for families of very low income. Much has already been done to encourage private capital to invest funds in the housing field. The Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill reaches out to what is virtually an untouched problem, that of furnishing decent housing for the middle income groups. At the same time, it also proposes a large development in housing for the very low income groups.

"While great progress has been made in the United States in the recognition of the worker's rights to a living wage—to more than a minimum of subsistence, to the decencies of life, to a fair share of the things that modern progress has placed at our disposal, to protection against the major hazards of industrial life, such as accidents, sickness, unemployment, old age—much less progress has been made in the recognition of the worker's right to decent housing. The Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill proposes to implement this right by placing at the disposal of private enterprise the resources necessary to provide for the housing needs of our large middle income groups.

"It is to be hoped that private enterprise will be ready to accept these new resources and make the best use of them. If not, there is bound to be a demand for increasing governmental activity in the housing field."

In many cities and counties throughout the United States Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill Committees are organizing to present the public's view to the first Republican Congress convened since the great boom and bust seventeen years ago. They represent a great part of the national population which now has no home and an even greater number of families haunted by the specter of homelessness so long as we cling to our futile, feeble, do-nothing policy. They will not accept industry's lame complaint that to house America would be "socialistic." They will not tolerate industry's current cry that 1,500,000 new houses —to be built when and if industry is properly bribed—will solve America's chronic housing shortage. They will not be content with industry's promise of a million homes in 1947—a promise on which builders already are beginning to default.

**They want 1,500,000 new homes this year and 12,000,000 in the next ten years. And they know the only way this can be done is under the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill.**

# Publishing in England

J. L. BENVENISTI

THE MOST serious thing that has happened in Britain during the recent nationwide electricity shutdown has been the suppression of *The Economist*. Not that life has become unbearable because for two weeks *The Economist* has not been published. The serious nature of the event lies in something else. It lies in the enunciation of a principle that is utterly disastrous and damnable.

The thing happened this way. The need for conserving power made it desirable to minimize the use of printing and paper during the crisis, and the Government went into a huddle with a body called The Periodical Proprietors' Association, of which most of us, including several periodical proprietors, had never heard. Having thus duly consulted the oracle, the government decided to suspend publication of all weekly and monthly periodicals.

So far, so good. Then Mr. Anthony Eden and a number of other prominent people wrote a letter to *The Times* suggesting that an exception be made in favor of the so-called "weeklies," a term which does not comprise all weekly periodicals but is applied to a number of papers, including *The Economist, The Spectator, The New Statesman, Time and Tide,* and so on, which have an extremely high standard of comment and criticism.

Now, it would have been perfectly feasible for the authorities to have said, "We are very sorry, but electricity is so precious that we cannot make any exceptions, however deserving. We admit it is a great hardship to go without *The Economist* at a time like this, but you will have to grin and bear it." That would have been that, and nobody would have said anything. But they did not say it quite that way. They said that nobody could assume the right of discriminating between one periodical and another. That, at any rate, was the general line taken in inspired comment in *The Times* and elsewhere. In a word, they did not say that no publication could be given preferential treatment, but that nobody could be found to say that any publication even deserved it. I make the following quotation from the relevant *Times'* leader:

"Every individual will have his own list of preferred reading, and no government which cares for individual liberty can take it upon itself to say which journals provide 'considered and reasonable comment' (the phrase used in Mr. Eden's letter) and which do not. The trade association of the periodical press has prudently refused to undertake such an invidious task."

**Of course this begs the question. The issue**

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was not whether every individual's preference should or should not carry equal weight, nor did Mr. Eden and his friends argue along those lines. The issue was whether the appearance of certain periodicals was or was not in the public interest. Nobody in his senses is going to deny that, particularly at a time like this, the publication of *The Economist* is socially more valuable and important than that of *"Fluffy Bits"* or *"The Poultry Keepers' Gazette."* But as the above leader shows, this issue was not faced, and because it was not faced *The Economist,* to quote the angry protest in its last published number, was treated "on a dead level with the astrologers, the pornographers and the trashmongers."

Now, having argued this matter with all and sundry, indeed, having talked of little else for the past fortnight, I know very well that, despite everything I have said, a case can be put up for the Government. I know there are dangers in the kind of discrimination which has been so cautiously avoided, and that a restrictive power over the press might be the thin end of the dictator's wedge. It would all be very convincing if one did not know perfectly well that this was not the motive. Free speech in Britain has, as I have often admitted, been carefully safeguarded by the Labor Government. But this does not in any way mitigate the fact that personalities like Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. Herbert Morrison are anything but shrinking violets who would in no circumstances set themselves up as judges over Israel, or tell the people what they should eat or wherewith they should be clothed. We know only too well that in almost every department they are only too ready to undertake the arranging of our lives, and that "Not what they want, but what is good for them" is in a very high degree the guiding principle of their activities. We must therefore look elsewhere for the real reason for their action—and the reason, which is plain enough, is a twofold one.

First of all, they did not wish to risk the wrath of the great press barons, who, as it happens, are the owners of most of the more widely circulated magazines, for these would have been heard from if any special favor had been shown to an insignificantly capitalized organ like *The Economist*—which, of course, was the reason why the Periodical Proprietors' Association would not stick its neck out. Secondly, and I think this was the more important consideration, there was the fear of giving offense to the man in the street by telling him that his weekly charivari of chorus girls and comic strips was not of the same importance as comment and criticism of the very first order. In so far as its action implies acquiescence in such a point of view, our government has really made a public denial of the fact that there are such things as absolute recognizable intellectual standards, and that comes about as near to being a sin against the Holy Ghost as, in the purely secular sphere, it is possible to commit.

It might well be asked why I should choose to indulge in violent criticism of the British Government in an American paper. I do so because I am dealing not with a specifically British phenomenon but with a malady that is latent in the very nature of democracy. That malady is the hypertrophe of humbug which in certain circumstances can be a very dangerous disease.

A wealthy democracy like America can put up with a great deal of ballyhoo and general mental dishonesty, and get away with it. It can deny and trample on the values which Britain has been sacrificing, and still survive. It is when a nation is fighting for its very existence, as we are most certainly doing at this moment, that this poison of unintegrity proves mortal. I am particularly apprehensive that in our case it may yet do this through its action in one particular department—the department of letters.

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In a previous article I said something about current literary life in Britain, and among other things pointed out that the general psychological background here was unfavorable to the production of the great novel. I also said something about material shortages hindering book production, but I did not greatly stress this circumstance because I believed it to be transitory.

Unfortunately, it is not proving so. The position seems to me to be getting worse rather than better, partly—and this is a welcome sign—because of the increase in the demand for books. But whatever the cause, Britain is becoming more and more a country without books, and I consider this the greatest hardship which we are called upon to suffer.

Now, the effect of this shortage of supplies upon the writer is very marked. Since British publishers at present need anything up to two years to produce a book, their capital tends to become more and more frozen, and they are less and less in a position to encourage a writer by substantial advances. Indeed, a writer can consider himself lucky today if he gets a halfpenny upon delivery of his manuscript. He must generally wait till publication (that is to say, anything up to two years) until he sees any money at all.

If the prospects to the literary recruit are thus unpromising, the position of the established writer is equally unsatisfactory, for since the publisher may only have paper for a fraction of his potential sales, his royalties may be much less than what he ought to receive. Successful British writers are therefore coming to depend more and more on the American market, which may or may

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not be willing to pay them an adequate reward. This is bad. There is no need for a successful writer to own six houses and a private yacht, but if literature is to be encouraged the prizes must definitely be on the large side.

All this makes it a matter of supreme importance that in the sharply discriminating system of priorities which is now being forecast, printing, binding and paper manufacture should have a front rank. Napoleon is reported once to have said, "I understand we have no poets; it is the concern of the Minister of the Interior." If he made it, the remark was a very silly one. But if a British Prime Minister were to say, "I understand we have no literature; it is the concern of the Fuel Controller and the Minister of Labor," he would be making a very intelligent observation indeed. Indeed, our chief worry at the moment is whether in point of fact a British Prime Minister will be likely to make it. There is, alas, room for a certain amount of doubt whether he would realize (and have the courage to act on his conviction), that the production of literature affects our prestige and with it the weight we carry in international affairs.

What, however, is even more disquieting is that priorities for printing, paper, etc., may not in themselves be enough. If literature is to be saved in Britain, it may for purely physical reasons be necessary for the authorities to exercise that selective function which in the matter of the weekly periodicals they have almost ostentatiously repudiated. It may be necessary not, of course, to introduce a system of government imprimaturs but to withhold supplies of paper from a publisher whose output is manifestly of no literary, educational or utility value whatever, on the ground that the production of rubbish is a hindrance to publication of more worthwhile material.

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Here, again, I know as well as the next man that this is a very dangerous proceeding, but we may not be able to help ourselves. Circumstanced as we are, it may be a choice between some expedient of this kind and the death of English literature.

However, there is no need to get alarmed about the possible dangers which such selective censorship involves, because there does not seem to be the faintest chance of any government here undertaking such a function. If ever the proposal is made, we shall no doubt be told that nobody has a right to discriminate, which means that there are no absolute standards enabling us to differentiate between a book with some kind of serious literary intention on the one hand, and "Passions of Paris" and "A Chorus Girl's Honor" on the other.

Now, this kind of thing is disastrous for two reasons. First of all, in our present predicament, we simply cannot afford anything like the second and third rate in the nourishment of our minds. I believe that these things do make a difference to our ability to cope with our situation. That that situation is a desperate one, brought about by the loss of our overseas investments on the one hand, and the destruction of Europe on the other, is no fault of ours. We shall nevertheless be at fault if we do not make the utmost efforts to cope with it.

Secondly, as I have already pointed out, anything in the nature of lying and humbug in our present situation is in itself perilous, and there is a great deal too much humbug about already—too much soft soap and windy rhetoric.

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We are, for instance, on suitable and unsuitable occasions, being told, whenever the notion can be brought in with even a semblance of appropriateness, that we are a great people. We are being told it by editors, by politicians, by anybody and everybody who happens to feel the urge to address the public. Well, maybe we are. And yet when I hear that phrase, my mind immediately reverts to one colossal fact which is staring everyone in the face, and which, for some reason or other, is hardly ever mentioned. We are at this moment expending nearly 80 million of our precious scarce dollars on the importation of American films. When I ask people why, I am told that the British worker must have his fun, and that the English output is insufficient to fill the screen. There may also be other reasons of a more discreditable kind—discreditable to America, I mean—but there is no doubt that this reason carries a great deal of weight.

Now, far be it from me to engage in cheap sneers at Hollywood. I am an ardent film fan, and gain enormous enjoyment from American films. I also gain enormous enjoyment from the consumption of roast chicken, but I would be perfectly ready to give up both if they endangered the material basis of my existence. My own opinion is that the overwhelming majority of people in this country would think as I do if the case were fairly put to them. But the politicians apparently think otherwise.

Well, if they are right (which I don't think they are), then they have no right to talk of the British as a great people. A people is not a great people if it can't dispense with Humphrey Bogart and Betty Grable without going utterly to pieces. If the British are really that sort of people, then they don't deserve to survive. At the moment, however, it still remains to be seen whether such a viewpoint is based on fact or is merely a politician's estimate.

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# Agricultural Alaska

WALTER J. MARX

IN MY LAST article I tried to describe something of the life and economy of northern Alaska. I trust that I did not exaggerate the extent of the "modern improvements" added since my boyhood on Seward Peninsula. In the winter one still melts snow for water. My sister, with her four children, not only does not have a "Didy-Wash" service but must do without any sort of laundry service. For lights one uses kerosene lamps or gasoline lanterns. At Teller there is no bakery, no doctor, no dentist, no services of any kind and Teller is quite typical of the small northern Alaskan town.

I mentioned that the radio and the airplane were the chief innovations since I left home. However, the dog team is still not obsolete by any means. In the old days in winter it required two or three full days to get to Nome, ninety miles distant. One time our parents were stormbound half way for an entire week. Today, one radios for a plane and the trip is made in three-quarters of an hour *if the weather is good.* Just after my first Alaska article was published a few weeks ago my sister wrote me about her last trip to Nome. She called a plane and started off with her last baby, a few months old. When they approached Nome the snow and the mist prevented their finding the city so they flew for two hours searching for a place to come down. Just as their gasoline was running out they spotted a dog-team, landed and hitch-hiked into Nome, some nine miles away. Since the snow was soft, it took three hours to cover the nine miles with the driver, the pilot and my sister mushing most of the way. It was only down hill that my sister could ride on the sled with her baby.

The climate of Seward Peninsula obviously is not suited for agriculture. Many people plant family gardens but raise little besides lettuce, radishes, turnips and under extremely favorable conditions, potatoes. For satisfactory results it is necessary to place a garden on the side of a building exposed to the south, and preferably, to use cold frames. Chickens have been maintained at Teller but at prohibitive cost. A sod house was used, heated by a coal stove. Food was imported 2,600 miles from Seattle and six tons of coal at $42.00 per ton were required each winter.

Strictly speaking, the title of this article is misleading. There is no really agricultural Alaska. One should say rather that in certain parts of Alaska inherent handicaps to successful agriculture are more than balanced by lucrative local markets to the extent that family farms are an economic possibility. It should be made clear, however, that agriculture in Alaska is economically possible only because the high transportation costs from the United States have the effect of a "protective tariff" upon agricultural products. These same transportation costs prevent the exportation of Alaskan agricultural products to the United States although even without the transportation costs such exports would be most unlikely considering the fact that the costs of production in Alaska are much higher than in the United States.

Therefore, there is a definite limit to the possibilities of agricultural expansion in Alaska. First, the amount of tillable land forms but a small fraction of the vast area of Alaska. Secondly, most of the tillable land is still inaccessible and the climate and rainfall in the agricultural regions of Alaska are such that the completely self-sufficient homestead is almost impossible. The Alaskan farmer must have access to at least a gravel road leading to some center of population in which he can market his crops for necessary cash. Consequently it is obvious that the pace of agricultural development in Alaska is limited by the growth of the centers of population. There is a further limitation: only the centers of population near the agricultural areas provide adequate markets. For example, although Matanuska butter is sold at Nome and at Teller, it will probably always be cheaper for northern Alaska to import its agricultural products by boat from Seattle. All this does not mean that there is not an opportunity for a tremendous expansion in agriculture in Alaska even under present conditions.

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Agriculture in Alaska today is restricted largely to the "railroad belt," the area served by the railroad and highway between Fairbanks, Anchorage and Seward. In 1939 products which could have been supplied by Alaska agriculture but which were imported from the United States were worth more than five million dollars. In the same year, before the inflated war-time demand, Alaska farms sold some 441,000 dollars worth of agricultural products. Significantly, of this total, milk and cream accounted for 306,987 dollars. In other words, the most lucrative form of agriculture in Alaska is the production of dairy products for local consumption.

In 1941, leaving out army shipments, almost two million dollars worth of farm products capable of being grown in Alaska were imported to the railroad belt alone. In the same year the value of the farm products sold through the Matanuska Valley Farmers Cooperative Association amounted to only 105,707 dollars. This figure includes almost all the dairy products of the valley, half the eggs and about three-fourths of the meat and vegetables raised in the valley.

It should be clear that some agriculture can

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be carried on almost anywhere. Far north of Teller, wild hay has been cut in the river valleys to serve as winter feed for draft horses. In rainy southeastern Alaska, where the rain prevents hay and grain from maturing, it is possible to grow certain products for lucrative local markets. On the other hand, water transportation from Seattle makes it cheaper for the capital, Juneau, to import its food from Seattle rather than from the farms of the railroad belt. There is a fair possibility for certain types of farming on Kodiak Island but scarcely on a commercial scale. Farming for subsistence might be linked with part-time employment in fishing for example.

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In general however, the agricultural areas of Alaska are considered to be the following: the Tanana Valley around Fairbanks; the Matanuska-Susitna Valleys along the railroad; and the Kenai Peninsula.

There are more than 7,000 square miles in the Tanana Valley and the soil comprises some of the best land in Alaska. Wheat, oats, barley and all root crops that can be grown anywhere in Alaska can be grown around Fairbanks. Yet, before the war, there were only about 200 people in this area making a living from the land. Grain is seldom injured by frost except in the valley bottoms. Farming is almost entirely commercial in the sense that the entire crop is sold at high prices in Fairbanks and the farmer then buys back his own subsistence. The temperature ranges from sixty below zero in the winter to almost 100 above in the summer, and the soil remains frozen to within two feet of the surface at all times. It is necessary to keep barns heated in winter. The fact that the soil is permanently frozen leads to a curious erosion problem: pitting. As layers of solid ice under the soil melt, the topsoil sinks down to form pits ranging from three to ten feet in depth and from twenty to fifty feet from hummock to hummock. It should be obvious that farming is carried on successfully at Fairbanks only because of the extremely lucrative market available in that city which forms the center of a trading zone of 227,000 miles. To import a hundred dozen eggs from Seattle to Fairbanks requires payment of a transportation cost of over thirteen dollars. For a hundred pounds of fresh meat the transportation cost is $8.36, for a hundred pounds of lettuce, $15.21, etc. The fact that veterans recently have opened an air service to Fairbanks from Seattle, importing fresh produce and charging the merchants two thousand dollars per trip, is some indication of the high cost of farm produce at Fairbanks. Obviously, the expansion of agriculture in the Tanana Valley is limited by the size of the present population of Fairbanks, between five and six thousand.

Some of the best agricultural land in Alaska is on the Kenai Peninsula, between Cook Inlet and the Kenai Mountains. The climate is never severe, for the Pacific Ocean is only a hundred miles to the south. The area of good agricultural land is more extensive than in the Matanuska Valley, the climate is more desirable, and much of the land, unlike in the Matanuska Valley, does not require clearing. The temperature ranges from around 25 degrees above zero in the winter to about 70 in the summer. At the southern tip of the peninsula the rainfall and snowfall is heavy, averaging about 65 inches and 80 inches, respectively annually, decreasing gradually until in the north the mean annual precipitation is only 14.5 inches.

The only two cities on the peninsula are Seward and Seldovia. Unfortunately, these are not connected with the agricultural western portion of the peninsula. In 1940 Seward had a population of only around one thousand and Seldovia 410. At the lower end of the agricultural plateau is the village of Homer with a population of about 325 in 1940. Homer is twenty miles by water from Seldovia and is the only outlet for agricultural products grown on the peninsula. Large ocean vessels dock at Seldovia and smaller coastal vessels at Homer. The main money crop has been potatoes. The location of military establishments on Kodiak Island has led to a good market for truck crops and livestock. Putting up hay for winter feeding remains a constant problem, however, because of the heavy rains. On the other hand, the mild climate enables stock to graze for seven or eight months out of the year. Hardy vegetables can be grown very successfully as well as berry fruits. The open grassland is admirably suited to livestock production.

Many veterans stationed on or near the Kenai Peninsula during the war returned after their discharge to take up homesteads but discovered that all the land along the road leading out of Homer had already been taken. Most of it was not being used but was being held by the owners for future retirement. Without roads into the hinterland, and in particular, without a connection to the railroad, there can be no extensive expansion of agriculture on the Kenai Peninsula. An article in a popular magazine recently described the sad experience of one veteran who found that every inch of good soil along Homer's thirty-five miles of road had already been taken. He finally purchased 105 acres without buildings for four thousand dollars. Although the Kenai Peninsula has over a thousand miles of coast line, the shallow waters of Cook Inlet and the tremendous tides which sweep up the estuaries of this inlet limit coastal navigation.

The Kenai Peninsula compares roughly in area to the State of New Hampshire. The much-advertised Matanuska Valley has an area approxi-

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mately equal to that of Rhode Island. The valley begins at the extreme end of Cook Inlet, 125 miles north of the Gulf of Alaska, has an average width of 20 miles between the Talkeetna Mountains on the north to the Chugach Mountains on the south, and extends for approximately 60 miles. The valley floor ranges from 36 to 400 feet above sea level. The valley is cut by numerous lakes and streams and certain sections, including the town of Matanuska, are subject to floods.

Out of an area of about 1,000 square miles, only 44 square miles or about 28,000 acres are now in farms. It is estimated that between 25,000 and 50,000 acres of timber land would be suitable for new farms and there is a much larger area in the nearby mountains that could be used for sheep and cattle.

The land in the Matanuska Valley consists of unconsolidated material left by the great glacier which once covered the valley. Indeed, the remnants of this great glacier remain to influence appreciably the climate of the area. The Matanuska and the Knik Glaciers are two of the best known remnants of the great ice mass but there are dozens of other glaciers in tributary valleys. The Matanuska, Knik and Little Susitna Rivers cross the valley in westerly and southwesterly directions but parts of the area are of such recent formation that there has not yet been time for the development of surface drainage. The morainic material is covered by silt left on the river bars at flood time and then blown over the area by the prevailing winds. The soil in general is a fine sandy loam although as might be expected there is much variation of soil types in the valley running from muck to very coarse gravel.

Some farms in the valley are able to obtain water from streams, springs, and lakes but most of the farms depend upon wells varying from about 15 feet to over 100 feet in depth.

The climate in the Matanuska Valley is a mixture of mild coastal and cold continental climates, with the former usually dominant. Cold waves come from the Arctic and the glaciers nearby cause abrupt temperature gradients which in turn cause frequent gales, sometimes of great violence and often in the dust storm category. Only once in the last ten years has the thermometer registered 32 degrees below zero. The average January temperature is 13 degrees above zero, the same as in Minneapolis. The average July temperature is 58.3. In August, 1942, the lowest temperature was 39 and the highest 78. There is a growing season of about 108 days, from May 24 to September 10, but this short period is partially balanced by the long Alaskan summer days. By the middle of April there are 14 possible hours of sunshine and by the middle of May, 17 hours. From mid-June to July there is practically no darkness. The average annual precipitation is 15 inches, most of which occurs in July and August, and during the winter months when the snowfall averages about 40 inches. Droughts have never been so severe as to cause crop failure. As on the Kenai Peninsula, however, August and September rains complicate hay-making.

The snow, rarely more than one or one and one-half feet deep, covers the ground during most of March. Soil begins to thaw in April and plants show signs of new life in late April and in May. In spite of the warm sun, plants are held back because of the frozen ground. The summer is cooler than in any agricultural section of the United States. Winter damage to perennial crops is common and excessive late summer rains and early autumn freezes have caused severe damage. In the windier parts of the valley, the blowing out of newly-seeded crops in spring and early summer is common. Because of the high mountains to the north, the glaciers nearby and the warm waters to the south, storms enter the valley from all directions.

All cereals grow well in the valley but ripen very slowly. It is possible to grow all the hardier vegetables and berry fruits, hay and forage crops, and the usual livestock. Oats, barley, wheat, rye, flax and buckwheat are the chief cereals grown. About the only common field crops which cannot be grown are corn and alfalfa. But I shall, in my next article, go into the problems of farming the Matanuska Valley.

# Communications

## THE CASE FOR VIET NAM

Washington, D. C.

TO the Editors: The investigation of the Indo-Chinese situation made on the spot by M. Marius Moutet, Minister for France Overseas, has cleared up several obscure questions and thrown light upon the drama which is taking place today in Tonkin and Annam.

Let us recall for a moment the relations between Metropolitan France and the Viet Nam on the eve of the November 20th outbreak. They were neither those of two foreign states, nor those of a sovereign state and a colony. The March 6th agreement, signed at Hanoi by M. Jean Sainteny for France and M. Ho Chi Minh for the Viet Nam, defined the latter country as a free state within the framework of two federations, placed one inside the other, so to speak: the Indo-Chinese Federation and the French Union. Was this agreement ever repudiated by either party? Not at all. Last September M. Ho Chi Minh was welcomed in Paris where he signed a modus vivendi that took as its basis the March 6th agreement and established the manner in which it was to be applied in the field of finances, customs and cultural relations. These agreements, I repeat, were not denounced, but were suddenly and unilaterally violated by a premeditated violent attack.

In the light of the statements by M. Moutet and M. Sainteny, both of whom are firm supporters of a peaceful understanding with the Viet Nam, it is quite clear that

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the aggression committed against the French at Hanoi was carefully prepared; it reminds one of the attack on Pearl Harbor although of much smaller proportions. On the very eve of the event, the Vietnamese Minister of National Defense sent General Morlière, the leader of the French troops, an extremely friendly and conciliating letter. At the very moment when the French general was reading it, an explosion blew up the central power station of Hanoi, the city was plunged in darkness and shooting began. Secret passageways had been dug between the houses and gardens, so that the Vietnamese combat groups did not have to show themselves in the streets; the French hospital was full of malingerers who took up arms the moment the insurrection began. Railway cars had been left at the level crossings to block the tracks; trees had been cut down and thrown across the highways. Finally, Ho Chi Minh and his aides had disappeared and established themselves in a secret command post. Anyone with the slightest experience of guerrilla warfare knows that such preparations require hours, days, even weeks. The friendly letter sent to General Morlière played exactly the same rôle as Mr. Kurusu's peace mission to Washington in December, 1941. In both cases the aim was to lull the adversary by showering him with marks of respect and affection, while final preparations were being made for the brutal attack that was to be made upon him.

Actually, the Vietnamese technique of surprise attack may well be compared to that of the Japanese. In the course of the recent hostilities, numerous Japanese officers, subalterns and technicians were captured or found dead on the field among Ho Chi Minh's troops. These subjects of the Mikado were officially classed as "deserters." The September agreement contained the solemn promise of the Vietnamese authorities to disarm and arrest these Japanese, enemy aliens, of whom not a few were war criminals. But, although they signed this promise, Ho Chi Minh and his friends used these same Japanese to officer and train their troops and to man their most modern engines of war, particularly field artillery and anti-aircraft guns. Thus, there are three facts which the inquiry of the Minister for France Overseas and the dispatches received from the Indo-Chinese peninsula make clear beyond the shadow of a doubt: that a treaty freely negotiated and concluded was violated; that an unpremeditated attack was made upon the French; and that the Viet Nam collaborated with certain Japanese who still do not consider themselves beaten more than a year after Hiroshima.

Another important element in the situation is the attitude of the native population itself. The Viet Nam is no longer the only motive force and the only center of activity, even in Tonkin and Annam. Its extremist faction, the Tong-Bo, which is of totalitarian tendency, has shown its true colors only too clearly. The atrocities committed by its supporters and the massacres of Annamites suspected of being lukewarm toward its ideas marked the first steps in the disintegration of the Viet Minh. It is significant in this connection that one of M. Ho Chi Minh's Ministers, the progressive Catholic leader,


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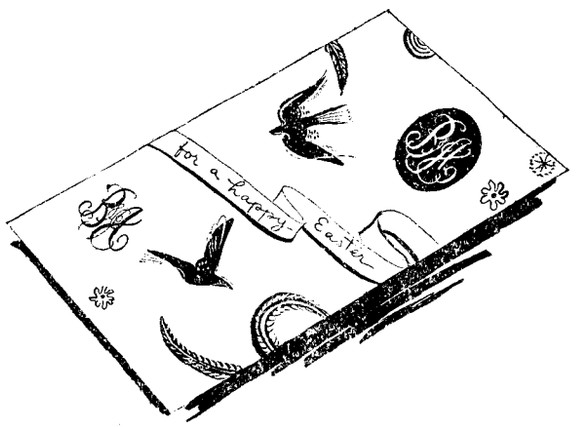


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M'Guyen Van Manh, did not follow his chief to his retreat and remained at Hanoi. In Cochinchina the Saigon Government, under the leadership of Dr. Hoach, seems to be gaining more authority as the people see that its policy of cooperation with France and of autonomy within the Federation is sparing them the ruin and suffering brought about by the actions of the Viet-Minh in Tonkin. Finally, in the non-Annamite countries, Cambodia and Laos, which have suffered, particularly the latter, from the neo-imperialism of the Viet-Minh, the events at Hanoi have strengthened the support of the people for the idea of an Indo-Chinese Federation under the leadership of France.

The question whether M. Ho Chi Minh is responsible for the November aggression or whether the most excitable elements, whose leader is M. Vo N'Guyen Giap went beyond the President's intentions cannot yet be solved; in any case, it is academic. In the face of a unilateral violation, of an act of aggression accompanied by indescribable atrocities, and a totalitarian attempt at domination by a small clique, France's policy must be to restore peace and to make certain that all agreements are respected. "On this earth there is a time for everything," says an ancient proverb. The status quo must first be reestablished, and then France will treat with those Vietnamese who are firmly resolved to honor their own signature. France, for her part, has no intention of reopening any of the questions settled by the former agreements or of undermining the autonomy of the Viet Nam within the framework. She will not use the present crisis as a pretext to go backwards or to take away what she freely granted. Her aim today, as it was yesterday, is to build a political and economic structure in Indo-China that will ensure the democratic development and material progress of the peoples of the peninsula without any measures that smack of oppression. Under these circumstances, the attack of the Viet-Minh is not only a gratuitous act of aggression; it is a blow against the real interests of the Indo-Chinese peoples which France must defend.

JACQUES SOUSTELLE
*Former Minister for France Overseas.*

## A NOTE ON ANTI-COMMUNISM

Esopus, New York.

TO the Editors: My hearty congratulations on your recent "A Note On Anti-Communism" (COMMONWEAL, Feb. 28, 1947). It was a point well taken and one that for a long time has been crying to heaven for something or other.

As I understand your article, it maintains that we can never hope to achieve a permanent peace, a stable society or the conquest of communism until we adopt some positive program of action. In other words it is rather inane to show people what is wrong with the world unless we also show them what is right. There is a paragraph in *Quadragesimo Anno* that states this very forcibly and explicitly. In speaking of an equitable distribution of profits between Capital and Labor, an increase in property owners and, in general, of the uplifting of the proletariat, Pius XI says:

> All these things (those mentioned in the last sentence) which our Predecessor has not only suggested but clearly and openly proclaimed, We emphasize with renewed insistence in our present Encyclical; and unless utmost efforts are made without delay to put them into effect, let no one persuade himself that public order, peace and the tranquility of human society can be effectively defended against agitators of revolution. (Q.A. 62)

The meaning of that paragraph can hardly be questioned. If we limit it to the danger of communism it states that unless we put forth our "utmost efforts" to bring about a better share in the profits of industry, to help in the cause of furthering more property owners and in general to assist the poor to rise from their poverty then we have no right to "persuade" ourselves that society can be defended against the Red agitators. That certainly is a positive program against communism and the Holy Father is putting it forth as absolutely necessary.

No one would say that the negative approach to communism should be abandoned. But to confine ourselves to a program of "scoring" and "exposing" and to disregard the far more important positive approach is hardly in accord with the Catholic social teaching enunciated by the more recent Pontiffs. And in this regard a large segment of the Catholic Press is a miserable failure. If they would only devote a little of the space they use to excoriate Tito and Stalin to a clear interpretation of the Church's doctrine on the rights of the laboring man, the just wage, vocational groups, etc., they would be doing a greater service to the cause of anti-communism.

Perhaps a clear example of this would be in the policy that many Catholic papers follow in reprinting speeches. You mentioned the Brooklyn *Tablet*. In January of last year the Hon. Clare Fenerty delivered an address at Madison Square Garden. It was undoubtedly a good speech and deserved reprinting, but it did emphasize the negative approach to communism. The *Tablet* not only reprinted the speech in its pages but printed it separately for general distribution. For that the *Tablet* should be praised. But in the June of that same year Bishop Bernard J. Sheil delivered two masterful speeches on the positive approach to communism. These two were reprinted in the papers and separately by the government printing office. But—not in the *Tablet*. In fact I have no recollection of the *Tablet* even mentioning them. As a result I doubt very much if the Catholics in the Brooklyn area were ever acquainted with the ideas expressed by Bishop Sheil. Comparisons are odious but, in my opinion, Bishop Sheil's speeches far outshone that of Mr. Fenerty.

Permit me to close this letter with a quotation from the same Bishop Sheil: "People who are well-fed, well-clothed and well-housed are not interested in communism. If we make American Democracy work, not only politically but economically and socially as well, we can conquer any ideology." Upton Close called the Bishop a communist for saying that. I wonder what the editors of the Catholic papers you mentioned would call him?

(Frater) JAMES S. FREEMAN, C.Ss.R.

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# The Stage & Screen

## *The Chocolate Soldier*

I WILL say at once that this Del Bondio-Bartsch production of the Strauss operetta (originally drawn, of course, from Shaw's "Arms And The Man") is fresh, pictorially and vocally delightful. It is a lesson in Revival. It is true, I am niggling enough to wish Guy Bolton (book-man) might have made more use of the paradox of the Shavian play. Now would seem such a perfect time for a musical extension of this *real* hero: a soldier whose knowledge of the skills of survival led him to the practice of carrying food rather than ammunition, and money rather than medals; and to the realization that the right moment to run ensures the right moment to arrive. However and undoubtedly, this conception would necessarily have sacrificed the more than satisfactory nostalgia upon which the production is based. Felix Brentano, the director, has used every silly, fancy, (yes) endearing operatic trick; and he has built each of these upon such detailed and tuned business, the result is charming. Mielziner's sets are at once unobtrusive and rich, Lucinda Ballard's costumes gay, and Ballanchine's ballet exactly moony enough. I thought all of the singing choice, particularly Frances McCann's in the heroine rôle. And the featured Billy Gilbert's wide beam, small lisp, and enormous jello girth are familiar comic properties. At any season, this would be clear holiday stuff. (*At the Century.*)

## *Brigadoon*

WITH THE APPEARANCE of this smash, it would seem to me that all of the sure creative people would be sitting under Cheryl Crawford's lintel with all of their ideas not only for sale. The absolute inherence of this Musical Play, its formal extensions, can only mean that here is a producer who has agreed to let her artists agree. To paraphrase a quote from one of her earlier efforts, the thunder you hear will be the roar of mounting esteem. Alan Jay Lerner's fantasy is entirely, almost nursery, simple. Through elemental means, a village in the Scottish Highlands—in about the 18th century, I judge—has been set to sleep by the faith of its Churchman, with the privilege of waking once every hundred years to pursue its life, liberty, joys and woe. Into this progression of antique leisure and drama, wander two American G.I.'s, and I daresay the details of the fable can thereafter be supplied by any reader with no imagination at all. What is exciting about the business will be that the divisions of music, song, dance, and playing—by (respectively) Frederick Loewe, Mr. Lerner again, Agnes de Mille, and an unheralded cast of brilliant young dance-actors—are each justly partitioned to stage the story. All of Gaelic romance is tapped; an enormous slice of narrative exposition is daringly employed; throughout, words, tunes, and action inter-depend and delight. It is apparent that the finagled sub-title—A MUSICAL PLAY—is in danger of becoming at last a form. For quibbles, I must record that Oliver Smith's painted mountings seemed somewhat over-photographic and lit, and I could wish that the thrilling, swirling forest-battle of the second part might have been elongated, reared into more of the motivation of that portion. Also (this will appear inching but is nevertheless essential), David Brooks's corduroy gear, in the rôle of the chief American, is not only unattractive but unbecoming. But for orchids, the choral and choreographic precision; Mr. Loewe's visually, as well as orally, satisfactory vocal arrangements, David Ffolkes's authentic dresses—amount to fineness. And the performance is singularly and plurally startling. I wish I had space to indulge impressions, and to delineate separate playing attacks (Marion Bell's and James Mitchell's, for instance); but as I have not, it seems only necessary to set down that this is as important as it is enchanting. Go, go. (*At the Ziegfeld.*)

KAPPO PHELAN.

## Days of Our Youth

OH, YOUTH, YOUTH!—and the way movies usually portray it! But every now and then a film does catch the joy and enthusiasm of youth.

*"The Red House,"* in spite of a rather implausible story based on the novel by George Agnew Chamberlain, conveys this spirit unusually well. Delmer Daves, who wrote the script and directed the picture, and Bert Glennon, in charge of photography, knew what they were about as they got their striking effects through a series of contrasts. Lovely, bright and clear rural scenes on sunny days are alternated with gloomy shots of scary woods predominated by the red house and its dreadful secret. And several refreshing, not-too-well-known young people help the themes considerably: boyish Lon McCallister, as the farmhand who insists on investigating the woods even after Farmer Morgan's threats, and a pretty newcomer, Allene Roberts, as Morgan's adopted daughter, are opposed to the brutish young man, Rory Calhoun, who guards the woods, and the alluring (in a sexy way) gal, Julie London, who ditches nice Lon for tough Rory. In further contrast to these four are the film's oldsters, particularly Edward G. Robinson, as

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Farmer Morgan whose hysteria about the woods and red house is more than psychopathic, and Judith Anderson, as his sister who shares his secret. I am not certain that this secret is worth all the fuss, but the picture's suspense, the build-up through contrasts of good and evil, will certainly keep you on edge. Like the beautiful photography, Miklos Rozsa's music sustains all these moods.

Although the young people in *"It Happened In Brooklyn"* are not as young as the ages they play, they succeed in giving the allusion of youth and bubbling spirits—and that's the important thing. Once again the story does not bear too close an analysis; but the players have so much fun in going through its easy requirements and in adding their specialties that we are entertained by their contagious goodwill. Frank Sinatra and Kathryn Grayson, as Brooklynites who aspire to be singers, and Peter Lawford, as a visiting Englishman who aspires to be like these Brooklynites as well as a composer, get involved in a triangle that is not to be taken too seriously. The song-and-dance routines and the players' genial warmth carry the picture over unlikely bits of plot. Furthermore, one of filmdom's warmest and most genial personalities, though no carefree youth, is allowed to put his best foot and nose forward. Jimmy Durante, as the janitor at the school where Kathryn teaches, proves a delight in his every scene. Mr. Chips is his idol; and in this youthful affair, Jimmy has a heart as big as Chips', and he's much, much funnier. Director Richard Whorf lets his players cut up a great deal; and fortunately most of their material is good; occasionally some of the numbers, though well done like Miss Grayson's singing from "Lakmé," slow up the picture's pace. Things pick up after every slowdown, however, and Durante can always be relied upon to turn up with a quip. My favorite scene shows Jimmy teaching Frankie to sing from the heart. I hope Mr. Chips Durante never says bood-bye.

If you like your thrillers done with a nice sense of humor, *"The Adventuress"* is your dish. This English picture combines chilling suspense with the subtlest kind of joking and provides entertainment that should send audiences into gales of nervous giggling. The attractive English actress, Deborah Kerr, who is now in Hollywood getting a big build-up for stardom, portrays an Irish lass who grew up with such a hatred for the English that when she comes of age in 1944, she rushes to join the I.R.A. (although Eire and England have supposedly been at peace with each other since the treaty of 1921). The I.R.A. doesn't take the girl; but a German spy (Raymond Huntley) is more than interested. And in no time, she is working for him in England. Director Frank Launder (who also had a finger in producing and writing) cleverly contrasts the heroine's youth and delightful naïveté with diabolic nazi cunning; and he alternates excitement with gay fun (Deborah convincing a crippled old man that she has already taken him out for an airing—when actually she has been using his wheel chair to dispose of a corpse). Although Miss Kerr is obviously the main attraction, the supporting cast in this spy-and-chase thriller is good; and it is pleasing to our vanity to see an unpretentious picture that was designed for intelligent audiences.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

# The Noble View

HENRY RAGO

IT IS NOT pleasant having to deal violently with so ardent and so decent-minded a book* as this, Mr. Watts's evangel to the Gentiles on the subject of poetry; and I am the more uncomfortable to reflect that Mr. Watts's writings, the result of twelve years of extremely difficult work in the proselytizing of working-class audiences, propose only the same opinions held by thousands of people who teach in our universities, write for our middlebrow magazines, and swarm over the lecture circuits. But that is the point. The heresy is widespread, and therefore not unimportant.

I shall call it the Heresy of the Noble View. In esthetics, the error consists in an identification of the beautiful with the sublime; so that there is no place in poetry for the grotesque, the horrible, or the ironically ugly—despite the examples of Villon, Shakespeare, Dante, Chaucer, and Goethe (to use the names most frequently cited by these "traditionalists" against the aberrations of "modernism")—and so that it becomes easy to say, as Mr. Watts says, that "modern poetry has forgotten beauty." In textual interpretation, the error consists in special pleading for poetry at its airiest and, frequently, its windiest, so that either in the service of or (more frequently) in place of philosophy and religion, poetry becomes the source of "great truths." In historiography, the error consists in a complete perversion of the word "tradition," so that it means less the way in which a literature keeps itself alive by endless renewals and recharging of the language than the way in which it preserves (as in the Georgians) the death-mask of its past.

Mr. Watts adds to all this a recklessness of language which sends any remaining exactitudes sprawling all over the shop. He admits in one place that he owes something to Chesterton. He owes a great deal; and nothing could be more ominous. Let anyone less than Chesterton at his best—and the challenge obviously includes Chesterton himself—attempt to be Chestertonian, and the result is lethal. Thus: "To the half-educated man even a Devonshire lane looks like a rut; to the fully educated man even a rut looks like a Devonshire lane." Now, Mr. Watts could have written this sentence exactly inverted, and it would still make as much sense as it does this way; perhaps more, because it could be argued that a full-educated man comes to know, more deeply and horribly than does a half-educated man, what a rut a rut can be. The truth is that this kind of writing can write itself; it just goes along at a gallop of its own, once you have learned to put a child's faith in its rhythms and to take not as a caricature but as a model Sir Max Beerbohm's famous parody of Chesterton ("If Shakespeare were living today, and I daresay he is . . .").

Equipped with this rhetoric, Mr. Watts can write: "To the modern religions the one great sin is to be reli-

* The Vision Splendid. Neville Watts. Sheed & Ward. $2.00.

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gious; to the modern poets the one great sin is to be poetical." Now, what modern religions does Mr. Watts mean? What does he mean by the word "poetical," besides what I'm afraid he means? And I'm interested to know who these "modern poets" are, because Mr. Watts has got all sorts of strange notions from a reading of them. (Our only light on this last question is Mr. Watts's own confession that his great hope for modern poetry was frustrated by the death of Rupert Brooke. Any bolder excursion into contemporary verse is seriously inconvenienced by the fact that Mr. Watts disenfranchises poets like Eliot and Auden: their writings he calls, simply, "work," "for I hesitate to call it poetry.")

Larger questions call for larger answers: "The chief proof of the high reality and divinity of poetry is that all the great poets from Homer to Housman are essentially at one in their message and at one in the medium whereby their message is conveyed." Because the alliteration of the two names is very important to this kind of rhetoric—more important, for instance, than the exactness or inexactness of their position at opposing extremities of the poetic tradition—we shall not wonder what Mr. Watts has done with Yeats or Valéry (we know what he has done with Eliot). But surely, between these two boundaries of Mr. Watts's tradition, there are Webster, Donne, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Hopkins, and dozens of others representing every possible attitude toward the universe. Are they "essentially at one in their message?" Only if Mr. Watts means something so reduced to fatuity that it need not be said at all—least of all as the "message" of a great poet. And are they "at one in the medium whereby their message is conveyed?" I cannot conceive of even a *fatuous* sense in which this could be true. Mr. Watts apparently does not like what R. P. Blackmur calls "the knowledge of discontinuity," but unhappily life is full of discontinuities; and art is even more trying, because as a *métier* it attracts a particularly difficult brand of individualist.

Mr. Watts can attain even cloudier heights when he jettisons such logic as these polemics carry and floats along with the inflated language of the *quasi*-Platonists. Here we drift among pleasant speculations about the true poet's love of "life" and the conviction of Dickens, for eaxmple, in "the triumphant goodness of the world." It would take the space of a full essay to say what needs to be said here: that literature is not about Providence (which is the only plane upon which we can speak of this "triumphant goodness") but, precisely, about the *tension* between human life and Providence. The point is of primary importance to the Christian critic, who can come from the writings of thinkers like the Abbe Brémond and Charles DuBos not only with the rich illuminations to be found there but also, unfortunately, with a tendency to see in literature an angelic testimony rather than a human confession. Literature, it must be said here, simply does not have so wholesome an origin as these thinkers ascribe to it; its origins, I fear, are as much involved with the knowledge of evil (and all the tortured forms which this consciousness can take) as with the glimpse of a supernal light. If God writes straight with crooked lines, then literature—whether tragic or comic—is about the crooked lines.

Finally, Mr. Watts says: "But the poetry which is confined to the covers of a book is as vain as the religion which begins and ends at the church porch. It is a better thing to live poetry than to read it; and herein lies the true democracy of poetry, that there is in it equality of opportunity for all." Now, for one thing, I am not sure that I know what Mr. Watts means about "living" poetry. I know only that most of the people who have tried it, in the various estheticist heresies of, for example, the *fin de siècle,* broke their minds and their bodies doing it. Poetry is *not* life; and least of all is it religion. And as for its "democracy," I know of nothing more difficult for the undisciplined taste. (One keeps hearing about folk-poetry in discussions of this sort; but folk-poetry is only, after all, one kind of poetry; a rather special kind, at that, and obviously carrying with it its own requirements of a "folk." And even under the best circumstances, folk-poetry could never produce "The Winter's Tale" any more than folk-music could produce a Mozart quartet.) Poetry is a highly technical use of language; it is language at its most severe. This is only to say that it is like a number of other pleasures in life which require a certain cultivation and perhaps even ascesis of the appetite before they can be enjoyed; but the enjoyment is, of course, worth the trouble and is the whole point; there is no other reason for reading poetry. And I am not saying that poetry is for "the few." It is for as many as possible, but these must be taught to read it or to listen to it before being taught simply that they like it. There are already too many people of whom it can be said that they think they like poetry, but if they knew what it really is they wouldn't like it.

For those who seriously wish to know how to read poetry, I should still recommend "Understanding Poetry," by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren; and for those who wish to go on from there to a humane but rigorous essay on the nature of the poet's "vision," there is no better little book than Father Thomas Gilby's "Poetic Experience."

# More Books of the Week

*The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man. By H. and H. A. Frankfort, John A. Wilson, Thorkild Jacobsen, and William A. Irwin. The University of Chicago Press.* $4.00.

HOW DID ancient man look at life? Not a few supposedly learned answers to this question seem naïve in retrospect, resembling as they do theories that since guides through the Canadian backwoods have never gone to college they know trails and streams only because their ancestors worshiped bisons. The present book is of a totally different breed. Based on lectures given to students in the humanities at the University of Chicago, it summarizes very ably what is known about "myth' and "science" in Egypt, Mesopotamia and the lands in which the Hebrews dwelt. Each topic is discussed by a specialist who can write clearly and unaffectedly. Professor John E. Wilson's outline of how the ancient Egyptians looked at the natural universe, the state and human values, is an

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admirable illustration of the way in which a great scholar respects the limitations of knowledge, despite the care with which he has considered what is known. Dr. Jacobsen's analysis of the Mesopotamian world-view is succinct but none the less rich in suggestion and intelligent evaluation. But it is perhaps to be expected that Professor William A. Irwin's study of the Hebrews would seem specially rewarding. It is an essay in anthropology rather than in religion. Even so it makes clear the distinctive character of traditional Jewish thought and experience. For all those who, like myself, have been looking for a relatively brief but respectably educated epitome of recent studies in a vast and important field this book will prove a memorable and satisfying aid.

GEORGE N. SHUSTER.

*Mrs. Mike. Benedict and Nancy Freedman. Coward-McCann.* $2.75.

MRS. MIKE, a fictionalized biography, might be recommended for the bobby-soxers, and no holds barred. There is certainly enough excitement and romance in the Freedman book to satisfy any adolescent cravings for adventure; no dubious passages nor any salacious innuendoes, and plenty of the fresh May morning the publishers mention on the jacket; in fact, *Mrs. Mike* is so pure and unsophisticated that it might, in the end, bore the bobby-sox off the high school crowd.

Katherine Mary O'Fallon, a sixteen-year-old Irish-American lass from Boston, is sent up to an uncle in the great frozen Canadian North country to try and cure her pleurisy. She meets the dashing, handsome Sergeant Mike Flannigan of the Royal Canadian Mounties, and before you can say "Begorra," they fall in love and get married. The authors omit nothing of this Arctic locale; sneaky trappers, grunting Indians, sly half-breeds, snarling grizzlies and huskies. It's a strenuous, snowy, exhausting whirl. Kathy thrives on it, however, in spite of all the cruel hardships and primitive ways and means. She bears two children who both die in a widespread diptheria epidemic.

According to a recent newspaper interview, Mrs. Mike Flannigan is still going strong, although her darlin' Mike passed on in 1933. She is planning to return to Canada where she can "see the Northern Lights and hear them move across the sky." Apparently her pioneer spirit and jauntiness have not deserted her.

Actually there is little excuse for this poorly-written, re-heated adventure pulp. Jack London did the frozen spaces much better without being cute about it. Possibly a good story could be written on Kathy's adventures, one to hold its own with *White Fang,* but the Freedmans aren't the ones to do it.

ELIZABETH JOHNSON.

*Autobiography of a Chinese Woman. Buwei Yang Chao. Translated by Yuenren Chao. John Day.* $3.75.

THIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY of a woman doctor, wife of a Chinese professor recently on the Harvard faculty, is a second venture, the first being "How to Cook and Eat in Chinese."

The author was "born in 1889 in a 128-room house on Huap'ailou in Nanking." She was the ninth child of her parents, adopted by her childless uncle, and brought up by him and his father, both of whom had noted the freedom of western women when they attended the joint Legation at London and Paris. She was dressed like a boy, taught with her brothers and boy cousins, and permitted to romp with her feet unbound. She was called "Little Master Three," and evidently she has never lost her tomboy swagger, boasting that she has "the habit of playing rough and ready as a gentleman, and the privilege of being treated by gentlemen as a lady." Genuine humor pervades her accounts of her part in revolutions, her experiences at the Tokyo Women's Medical School, her founding of a private hospital in Peiping, her meeting with the American-educated philosopher-linguist Yuenren Chao, her marriage to him and their subsequent life with their four daughters at Chinese universities and at Yale and Harvard. Of family loyalty, courage and self-sacrifice, there is an abundance in this book; of traditional Chinese reverence, not a trace. For every prospective missionary to the Far East here is a modern case history to ponder. Bertrand Russell, whose interpreter her husband was in Peiping, may have influenced her a little; Margaret Sanger certainly did, and she opened a clinic to teach her doctrines.

Of the Chinese text, Dr. Yuenren Chao writes that "she is primarily concerned with telling about herself, and since she does not speak any pure dialect, whether of Peiping or of Nanking, she writes only as she talks in real life." His translation must be remarkably fine for the usually correct, rather racy English gives one the sensation of listening to the quick and witty conversation of an exceedingly active, vigorous, perhaps headlong modern.

D. H. MOSELEY.

*Struggle For Freedom. Sterling E. Edmunds, LL.D. Bruce.* $4.50.

THIS BOOK will not secure the number of readers it deserves. It contains many unpleasant truths. To make it even more unacceptable, it presupposes a real interest in good government by the average person. Since this same average person does not concern himself for even one hour per year with the problem of government, that person will be unconcerned with the viewpoint of the author, who was for many years a lecturer on constitutional law at St. Louis University.

Professor Edmunds is convinced that the American people were losing control over their lives and liberties. The federal government, in his opinion, with its increasing use of boards and administrative law, constituted a threat to freedom. He maintains, for example, that "The possession of political power is the one unfailing means by which its possessor may emancipate himself from the necessity of toil and sacrifice by which alone the good things of life are created." He contends, furthermore, that "political power, designedly limited, is constantly pushed outward with increasing satisfaction" and always at the expense of the man who is not in politics. He speaks plainly at times: "Deprivation of property and property rights of American citizens, without due process of law . . . has recently become the settled practice of the Federal Government." Administrative boards rather than courts of law now direct the lives of the American people. It reminds the author of sixteenth-century England. The background material which he presents in the field of constitutional law is perhaps unsurpassed by that found in any other book.

Taxation, supposedly for governmental needs, is now being used openly for the redistribution of wealth. Mi-

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IN RETROSPECT, by Kurt von Schuschnigg, a special article written for The Commonweal on the conflict between the Social Democrats and Christian Socialists in the Austria of the early 30's. The former Austrian Chancellor provides a strong answer to the charge that European Christian Democrats were reactionaries at heart.

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JAMES BURNHAM — PUBLICIST OR POET? by Waldemar Gurian, evaluates the leading ideas in Mr. Burnham's widely discussed new book, "The Struggle for the World."

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nority rights are being disregarded, since the politicians are concerned only with the votes of the majority. Public officials are merely rubber stamps, expressing the unintelligent as well as the reasonable wishes of the majority. The Supreme Court has placed its approval on the actions of administrative tribunals; the law is what the dominant political party at the moment wants it to be. Such are the contentions of the author; no objective person will question them. But does anyone any longer care for good government?

PAUL KINIERY.

*Two Worlds of Music. Berta Geissmar. Creative Age.* $3.00.

MISS GEISSMAR'S two worlds are those of the conductors, Furtwängler, in the period 1921 to 1935, and Beecham, 1936 to 1945. The author was secretary to each of these figures in recent musical history. She undoubtedly keeps a carefully detailed diary, which permits her here to give a conversational, consistently interesting account of her experience among the musical greats on both sides of the Atlantic. Early chapters hold special interest because of Wilhelm Furtwängler's recent collaborationist trial. Miss Geissmar, writing before the fact, persuades, however, that the director of both the Berlin Philharmonic and the Berlin State Opera was profoundly an artist, who fought against the encroachments of nazi officials in his artistic domain. His eventual capitulation, one may infer, he justified because he would rather defend his art in a corrupt native land than enjoy a somewhat easier lot as an exile.

Sir Thomas's elaborate and endearing eccentricities come through full-length. In the Beecham section the reader meets practically all the outstanding instrumentalists and vocalists extant, from London to New York, Paris, Rome, Vienna and way stations. And from Toscanini almost all the way to Tagliavini. The book will well reward the concert goer who harbors an ounce of curiosity about what goes on besides the performance.

JOHN BRUBAKER.

*Twilight of Painting. R. H. Ives Gammell. Putnam.* $5.00.

MR. GAMMELL, a practicing painter with whose work I am unfamiliar but which I have little difficulty in visualizing, dedicates *Twilight of Modern Painting* "to the painter, born or unborn, who shall lift the art of painting from the low estate to which it has fallen." It is his opinion that "unless the recorded experience of mankind . . . is contradicted . . . future generations are not likely to value many of the pictures produced during the last quarter of a century. . . . One would suppose that any person with reasonably normal eyesight could perceive the grotesqueness of 90 per cent of these pictures, though he might be unable to appreciate the mediocrity of most of the remaining 10 per cent."

These are among the mildest of Mr. Gammell's statements about modern painting, which he invariably capitalizes or encloses in parentheses as a measure of his disdain. He makes a point of declining to name any of the contemporary painters he excoriates; from incidental remarks, however, it becomes clear that the painters he calls modern are the painters whom genuinely modern painters abjure as strongly as he. The decline of modern painting he ascribes chiefly to a false division between the academic and impressionist ("inspired amateur") traditions; it appears to have escaped him that the most vital modern painting represents a reaction from the limitations of impressionist painting as extreme as was the reaction of impressionist painting from academic painting. It appears likewise to have escaped him that the dreadful painting by Henri Regnault which he selects for his frontispiece and jacket decoration represents nearly as great a distortion, in the literary, heroic-romantic direction, from the purely representational as do modern paintings in the formal plastic direction.

Mr. Gammell is especially upset by the poor training offered by present-day art schools. He has a valid complaint there; unquestionably the mass-production art schools of today, where the director of a class coaches his too-many pupils for a maximum of two hours a week, communicate less of the necessary technique of painting than the older system of apprenticeship of a few likely pupils in a master's studio; and undoubtedly too many incompetents are encouraged to become painters by the success of untutored primitives. But Mr. Gammell's championship of the academic standards of "workmanship" falls sadly flat in face of the rogue's gallery of 19th century academic painting which he selects for reproduction.

DAVID BURNHAM.

*Land of Promise. Walter Havighurst. Macmillan.* $3.00.

THE SUBTITLE of Mr. Havighurst's historical and antiquarian book is "The Story of the Northwest Territory," which is, of course, the Middle West—an area hard to make romantic, however significant it certainly is. The vivid and thought-stirring personalities among the first comers don't really crowd each other, and the author has not sought out to emphasize particularly the historic themes which might best be exemplified in the development of the land from Lake Superior to the Ohio. So the story takes its time accumulating interest. It does best describing the actual transport and travel into the frontier region, by river, road, canal, lake and railway.

*Apologia Pro Vita Sua. Cardinal Newman. Sheed.* $3.00.

SHEED AND WARD perform the good service of bringing out a new edition, with bright, if not gaudy cardinal cover and jacket, of Newman's still and again provocative and enlightening and beautifully written and composed personal work. It is the later and less polemical edition of 1865 with the seven appendices of that text. Maisie Ward's introduction is brief and modest and useful.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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